

Session 7 Philadelphia (Part 2): Faithfulness unto Eternal Rewards

⁷“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”:
⁸“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. ⁹Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. ¹⁰Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. ¹²He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. ¹³He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’” (Rev. 3:7-13)

I. PRIMARY MESSAGE: FAITHFULNESS TO JESUS NOW RESULTS IN ETERNAL HONOR

A. Jesus invited the faithful in the church of Philadelphia to have positions of honor in His eternal government over the earth related to their obedience in this age. Jesus will open a door of blessing (v. 8) to them that includes vindication before their enemies (v. 9), grace to walk in victory in the most difficult time in human history (v. 10), and a place of authority and intimacy with God in the age to come (v. 11-12). They were invited to reign with Jesus in the greatest levels of light and communion with God as the highest human expression of glory and greatness.

B. The overcomer is one who sustains mature obedience to Jesus in their life to the end.

C. Jesus promised John government in the age to come related to his obedience.

²⁷“We [the apostles] have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?”²⁸ So Jesus said to them, “...in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Mt. 19:27-28)

D. In this letter, Jesus developed the dynamic promise that John captured in John 14:21-23. Jesus promised to manifest Himself to those who obey. This promise will unfold for billions of years.

²¹“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved [God’s pleasure openly displayed] by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him...”²³“We will come to him and make Our home with him.” (Jn. 14:21-23)

E. Revelation 3:7–13 is based on the prophecy that Isaiah gave about Shebna, King Hezekiah’s chief leader being removed from his government position to be replaced by Eliakim (Isa. 22:15-25). God promised to place on Eliakim’s shoulder the key to the house of David so he could open and shut the doors of the royal resources to release God’s will in the kingdom of Israel.

²²“The key of the house of David I will lay on his [Eliakim’s] shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open...”²⁵“In that day...the peg [Eliakim’s position] that is fastened in the secure place will be removed.” (Isa. 22:22, 25)

II. PROMISE FOR OVERCOMERS: EIGHT PROMISES

⁸“See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it...⁹Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan...indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.¹⁰Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.¹¹Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.¹²He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the City of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.” (Rev. 3:8-12)

A. **Promise 1: See, I have set before you an open door and no one can shut it.** Jesus set before the saints at Philadelphia the invitation to governmental positions of honor in His eternal government (Millennium, then the eternal state) related to their obedience in this age. He also offered them open doors in the spirit that give them access to the revelation of God’s heart.

B. **Promise 2: I will make them come and worship before your feet.** Vindication of the faithful before the unbelievers who persecuted them by paying homage to them in the Millennium (Isa. 45:14; 49:23; 60:14). They will bow their knee to Jesus in the presence of the people they persecuted in the first century. The false Jews will do homage at the feet of the Philadelphian church in the age to come.

¹⁰At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth...¹¹and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord... (Phil. 2:10-11)

¹⁴The sons of those who afflicted you shall come bowing to you, and all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at...your feet; and they shall call you The City of the LORD. (Isa. 60:14)

C. **Promise 3: I will make them...to know that I have loved you.** The Father will reveal to the nations the fact that He loves His people. These unbelieving Jews will witness Jesus’ love towards these people on the last day.

²³“I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” (Jn. 17:23)

D. **Promise 4: I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more.** To be a pillar is a position of honor and authority in the millennial kingdom. Pillars speak of stability, firmness, beauty, and permanency. A pillar bears the weight of the building.

E. All believers are part of God’s spiritual temple (Eph. 2:21-22), but some will be pillars who hold a position of authority, responsibility, and honor in the Millennium.

⁹When James, Cephas [Peter], and John, who seemed to be pillars... (Gal. 2:9)

1. The saints in Philadelphia were offered the reward of being a pillar in the temple. They will have a significant load-bearing role of authority that is permanent for all eternity. This speaks of their governmental assignment as His standard bearers.

2. In the ancient world, when someone served their city in a special way, a pillar was built in their honor and placed in one of the pagan temples with their name written on it. Pillars were built in the ancient world to honor people. Jacob set a pillar on Rachel's grave (Gen. 35:20). God allows "pillars of remembrance" recalling someone's great devotion to the Lord. There will be a pillar in the land of Egypt in the Millennium (Isa. 19:19).
- F. Jesus promised them that they would never be removed from their place of honor. In Isa. 22:15-25, Eliakim was exalted, yet it was a temporary promotion that came to an end (Isa. 22:25).
- G. Pillars beautify buildings, while bearing their weight and recalling past deeds of greatness.
- H. The twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve apostles will have their names written in the New Jerusalem.
¹²She had a great and high wall with twelve gates...and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel...¹⁴The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Rev. 21:12-14)
- I. The pillars in God's earthly temple and tabernacle give us insight into this promise.
 1. Solomon put two large bronze (brass) pillars in the porch of the temple and gave them names (1 Kgs. 7:13-22; 2 Chr. 3:17). He named one pillar Jachin (stability), and the other Boaz (strength). These were probably large fire altars that burned incense to God. Each had shafts into which the oil basin on top drained, that they might function like a lampstand (1 Kgs. 7:41; Zech. 4:3). These immense incensed stands illuminated the facade of the temple, recalling the two beautiful and glorious pillars of fire and cloud that led Israel through the wilderness. These pillars were beautified with gold, chains, pomegranates, and lilies.
 2. Moses was instructed to put twenty bronze pillars on each of the three sides of the tabernacle, totaling sixty pillars (Ex. 27:10). Pillars of acacia wood were built at the door of the tabernacle and overlaid with brass; at the second veil they were overlaid with gold (Ex. 26:32, 37).
 3. The pillars of cloud and fire were moving pillars that guided Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 13:21-22; 14:19-24; 33:9).
 4. Israel established twelve pillars at the foot of Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:4).
- J. **Promise 5: I will write on him the name of My God.** To have the name of God on us means that we are recipients of His desire, authority, partnership, and revelation of His heart and beauty. To have God's name on us speaks of deep revelation of His heart and mind given to us.
⁴They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. (Rev. 22:4)
¹⁶"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them..." (Heb. 10:16)

1. Aaron, the high priest, wore on his forehead a golden plate with the engraving “HOLY TO THE LORD” (Ex. 28:36-38). The saints are sealed on their foreheads (Rev. 7:1; 14:1) with the name of Jesus. God’s name will be written on their foreheads (Rev. 22:4).
 2. Jesus refers to the Father as “My God” four times in Revelation 3:8-12 to emphasize His relationship. Jesus explicitly says, “the name of My God.” This is priestly terminology that does not minimize Trinitarian theology nor lend to subordinationism, or arianism, but reveals Jesus’ function as a man in His priestly office.
- K. ***Promise 6: I will write on him the name of the City of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God.*** Authority in the city and ability to comprehend it. Some are given the key to a city or are called a father of that city to honor their connection to that city. This points to their unusual authority, commitment, and understanding of that city.
- L. ***Promise 7: I will write on him My new name.*** Revelation of Jesus’ heart and beauty; Jesus’ new name speaks of a fuller revelation of Jesus as seen in Revelation 19:12.
- ¹²He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. (Rev. 19:12)*
- M. ***Summary of Promises 5–7:*** The greatest place of intimacy available to the human spirit is seen in the names that Jesus writes on the hearts and minds of the faithful: the Father’s name, the name of the New Jerusalem, and Jesus’ new name. In Revelation 2:17 and 3:5, believers’ names are emphasized as one part of their relationship with Jesus. Here, God’s name is emphasized.
- N. ***Promise 8: I will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*** Jesus promises to keep us spiritually vibrant and protected from sin as well as God’s judgment in the end times. The “hour of trial” had a partial application in the first century, when persecution inflicted by the Roman Empire increased greatly on the known world. This prophetically pointed to the Great Tribulation.

III. BEING KEPT FROM THE HOUR OF TRIAL (REV. 3:10)

¹⁰“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.” (Rev. 3:10)

- A. This is the most debated verse in Scripture about the timing of the rapture. The debate on this passage hinges on how we understand “from.” The “hour of trial” is the Tribulation. The two main interpretations of “***being kept from***” the hour of trial are being “***preserved in the midst of it***” (posttribulation rapture) or being “***removed from the scene of it***” (pretribulation rapture).
- B. In this passage, Jesus is promising power and victory to the Church during the Tribulation, which will be the most glorious and difficult hour in history (posttribulation-rapture position). Jesus promises deliverance by the grace of God in the greatest hour of testing. He promises a spiritual keeping that enables us to obey God faithfully in the midst of Satan’s attacks (temptation and persecution) and a physical keeping from God’s judgment on the wicked in the Tribulation. Christians will not experience the outpouring of God’s wrath (1 Thes. 1:10; 5:9).

⁹*God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through...Jesus. (1 Thes. 5:9)*

- C. In John 17:15, Jesus did not pray that believers be removed from the scene, but that they be *preserved in victory in the midst* of trouble, by being enabled to stand strong before Satan's attack. Jesus specifically asked that His disciples *not* be taken or removed from the world, but made to stand strong.

¹⁵*"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one." (Jn. 17:15)*

- D. I have never heard pretribulation rapture taught with an emphasis on the conditional aspect of this promise, which is to persevere in obedience. According to this passage, only those who persevere will be kept from the hour of trial. If this passage refers to the pretribulation rapture, then any who fail to persevere in obedience will miss the rapture. Thus, only the faithful will be raptured. However, it is not a biblical concept. Scripture clearly states that *all* Christians, faithful and unfaithful, are raptured at the same time (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thes. 1:10; 4:16-17; 5:9).

- E. Jesus promises spiritual protection, which will often include physical protection, as the Lord supernaturally shields in the midst of the fire of His judgment, or causes His judgment to pass by a geographic area. The ultimate protection is against their crown of victory being lost (v. 11).

³⁴*"Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶Watch...and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things...and to stand before the Son of Man." (Lk. 21:34-36)*

- F. The Church will be on earth in these difficult days, experiencing Satan's rage with persecution. However, the Church will be kept from the hour of trial, which is Jesus' judgment coming on the unbelieving world.

¹³*Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day...¹⁶taking the shield of faith...able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. (Eph. 6:13-16)*

- G. Many will find protection from God's wrath and plagues sent on the Antichrist and his followers. God's protection against His judgment will require that people live close to Him to hear His voice. God will give an anointing to be faithful and to receive direction in the end times.

¹*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty...*³*Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence...*⁵*You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day,*⁶*nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.*⁷*A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you...*¹⁰*No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;*¹¹*For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.*¹²*In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.*¹³*You shall tread upon the lion...the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot. (Ps. 91:1-13)*

- H. Saints will be kept in the midst of the trial as seen throughout Scripture.
1. Noah was preserved in the midst of the flood (Gen. 6-8).
 2. Lot was preserved from the fire that fell on Sodom (Gen. 18-19).
 3. Israel was preserved in the midst of the plagues of Egypt (Ex. 4-12).
 4. Daniel was preserved from the lions while in the lions' den (Dan. 6).
 5. The three Hebrew youths were preserved from the fire, but not from the furnace (Dan. 3).
 6. Paul was not saved from prison, but was in prison as the door was opened by God (Acts 16).
- I. This hour of testing is for the people of the whole world (*oikoymenes*, inhabited earth). The test is directed towards “those who live on the earth,” referring to unsaved earth dwellers (Rev. 6:10; 8:13; 11:10 [2x]; 13:8, 14; 17:8), as opposed to believers, whose citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). The hour of trial is directed towards the entire non-Christian world. Believers will be kept from it, not by the rapture, but by spiritual protection against the forces of evil.
- J. The pretribulation rapture teaching sees this as being removed from the earth during the Tribulation by the rapture. They see this as being kept from a specific time period of trouble on earth instead of yielding to compromise in sin or persecution.
- K. The pretribulationists see this as a promise of being exempt from “the hour of trial.” However, this overlooks the fact that the apostles walked in the trials as the Church has done throughout church history. It is inconceivable that when the Church is most purified and glorified in all history, it would be exempt from being proven faithful in enduring Satan's attack.
- L. The Philadelphian church had been faithful in a trial, and so Jesus would be faithful to them in their time of greater trial. If the Church is raptured before the trouble comes, we are left with the problem of answering why so many saints are martyred during the Great Tribulation. If God's plan is to allow martyrdom of the saints, then why would the Church be taken away in this hour?
- M. Not all the saints in the Tribulation will be exempt from physical harm caused by Satan's rage, as many will be martyred. However, they will be kept from God's judgments (Dan. 7:21, 25; 8:24; 11:33-35; 12:7, 10; Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9, 14; 9:21; 11:7; 13:7, 15; 16:5-7; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; Mt. 10:21-22, 28; 24:9; Lk. 12:4-7; 21:16-19; Jn. 15:18-16:4).
- N. We are not afraid of physical death because it holds no eternal significance for us. Our great reward is the power to love and be loyal in the midst of persecution and temptation. This promise assured the faithful who had endured persecution that they would receive even greater grace to avoid failure during the hour of trial. The greatest joy and desire of the end times is to be found faithful. They were encouraged to bear their present difficulties, knowing that it was preparing them for the anointing of God to walk in greater faithfulness in a time of greater difficulty.

IV. HOLD FAST TO OBEDIENCE: SO THE CROWN IS NOT LOST

¹¹*“I am coming quickly! **Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.**” (Rev. 3:11)*

¹⁵*If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved. (1 Cor. 3:15)*

⁸*Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. (2 Jn. 8; NIV)*